

**STICTOPLEURUS PUNCTATONERVOSUS (GOEZE, 1778)
(HEM.: RHOPALIDAE) BREEDING IN MIDDLESEX**

RICHARD A JONES

135 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 0AZ

E-mail: bugmanjones@hotmail.com

I SWEEPED TWO specimens of a *Stictopleurus* from the flowery area of rough grassland on the embankment of the River Thames, next to Chelsea Power Station (O.S. grid reference TQ 264769, VC 21 – Middlesex), on 8 August 2000. A third specimen escaped. Several more, including some nymphs, were found on a follow-up visit on 16 August 2000.

At first, I took them to be *Stictopleurus abutilon* (Rossi), which I had previously found elsewhere in the London conurbation in West Acton and Woolwich (Jones, in press). But reference to Moulet (1995) showed that the Chelsea specimens were in fact *S. punctatonervosus*. This medium-sized, brown, ground bug is known, in Britain, from just a handful of specimens. Several were found during the 19th century, suggesting that it became temporarily resident in the Charlwood area of Surrey. It was listed as “extinct” by Kirby (1992), who reported that a record from Kent probably referred to *S. abutilon* and one from Essex was unsupported by a specimen. The Essex specimen was later discovered to be a misidentification of *Rhopalus subrufus* (Gmelin) (Kirby, 1997).

However, the bug was rediscovered in Britain in 1997, when three specimens were found in separate localities in North Essex (Bowdrey, 1999), suggesting that it had again become established. Jerry Bowdrey visited The Moors, Colchester, in that county, on 21 September 2000 and located two adult *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus*, so it still appears to be thriving in at least one site (Bowdrey, pers. comm.).

Careful examination of the Chelsea specimens made me realise that I had actually found *S. punctatonervosus* before in the London area, but had assumed that they were *S. abutilon*. This was because I had relied on the male genitalia to identify the insects and named accompanying female by association. As it turns out, both species occurred together on the same site at West Acton, as they have on at least one other site (P. Kirby, pers. comm.)

Having, now, a number of specimens of both sexes of both species, it is clear that *S. punctatonervosus* is the more widespread species in London, and I also have two specimens from Woodlands Farm, Bexley (TQ 4476, West Kent, VC 16), 7 July and 20 August 1998, swept in derelict farm building site, and one from West Acton, (TQ 197817, Middlesex, VC 21), 5 October 1999, swept on rough grassy railway embankment.

The insect's ecological requirements are unclear, since so little is known of its ecology, but Kirby (1992) states that the maintenance of dry, open and sunny conditions might be important, with long and short vegetation and areas of bare ground. The Chelsea population is breeding on a small (approximately one hectare) site, exactly fitting these requirements. The site is a prime example of “London

urban derelict" habitat. It had once been a riverside oil-intake terminal for the Chelsea Power Station, but since its disuse several years ago had been bulldozed and abandoned. It was now taken over with a rough growth of thin grasses, flowering herbs, some brambles and many bare areas.

The Bexley site was also a sparsely-vegetated derelict plot, and very similar in character. Once a farmyard, it had been roughly levelled or bulldozed then abandoned for several years. The West Acton railway embankment was a mixture of tall grass and bramble scrub, but with some bare areas where recent digging had taken place.

Other noteworthy species, found at Chelsea, were typical of such a sparsely vegetated London site and included the local shieldbugs *Aelia acuminata* (L.) and *Podops inuncta* (Fabr.); the mainly coastal rhopalid bug *Chorosoma schillingi* (Schum.); the recently established lygaeid *Nysius senecionis* (Schilling); the clouded yellow butterfly *Colias croceus* (Geoff.); the nationally scarce sphecid *Gorytes bicinctus* (Rossius) and its cuckoo parasite *Nysson trimaculatus* (Rossius); the nationally scarce eumenid wasp *Microdynerus exilis* (H.- S.); the nationally scarce Adonis ladybird *Adonia variegata* (Goeze); the Red Data Book (RDBK – insufficiently known to categorise) beetle *Olibrus flavicornis* (Sturm); and the uncommon pill woodlouse *Armadillidium nasatum* Budde-Lund. All are warmth-loving species, characteristic of the sparsely vegetated, dry, well-drained plots which are London's threatened ruderal habitats.

References

- Bowdrey, J. P. 1999. *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus* (Goeze, 1778) (Hem.: Rhopalidae) rediscovered in Britain and new to Essex. *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* **111**: 135-136.
- Jones, R. A. 2001. [*Stictopleurus abutilon* (Rossi) exhibited at BENHS annual exhibition, 11 November 2000.] *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History* **14**: in press.
- Kirby, P. 1992. Review of the scarce and threatened Hemiptera of Great Britain. *UK Nature Conservation* No. 2. Peterborough: Joint Nature Conservation Committee.
- , 1997. Essex Heteroptera report for 1996. *Essex Naturalist* **14** (new series): 18-20.
- Moulet, P. 1995. Hemiptères Coreoidea (Coreidae, Rhopalidae, Alydidae) Pyrrhocoridae, Stenocephalidae Euro-Méditerranéens. *Faune de France* vol. 81, pp. 206-221.

***Bruchidius varius* (Ol.) (Col.: Bruchidae) in south-east London**

This recent addition to our list was discovered in East Sussex in 1994 by P.J. Hodge (*Coleopterist* **5**(3): 65-8). The description and admirable figures there given show it to be very distinctive among our members of the family. In conversation with Mr Hodge I learnt that the species appeared to be spreading outward from Sussex, so – given that the chief foodplant, red clover, often grows freely on Woolwich Common here – it was not wholly unexpected when among my captures there on 10.vi.2000 a single female *B. varius* was found. Now that the species has reached this locality, it will doubtless be encountered again in due course.– A.A. ALLEN, 49 Montclam Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.